

ENHANCING MOTIVATION IN EFL TEACHING



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ABSTRACT

The present paper seeks to explore the fundamental role of motivation in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching. When we acquire our mother tongue, we have a natural need to learn it due to the primary need of communicating. Nevertheless, this does not work when acquiring a foreign one, as we do not live in a scenario where its use is indispensable. Normally, children and teenagers are not mature enough to realise about the numerous benefits of learning languages, because such advantages will probably not show until a distant future. As a result of this premise, we need something else if we want to attain that they develop a willing to learn.

Throughout the present project, the reader will reflect upon the essentiality of enhancing a more innovative and attractive methodology in the EFL classroom. Commonly, the lack of capacity of the students is not the reason that justifies negative outcomes or even academic failure. The cause of these problems, nonetheless, seems to be a lack of motivation towards the subject. We live in a technological era in which learners are exposed to numerous distractions that are, beyond doubt, much more appealing than a teaching approach whose basis relies on repetitive grammar exercises, memorising vocabulary and learning the four linguistic skills through non-authentic monotonous situations.

This study seeks to prove that adapting course books or creating new materials by taking into account students' interests, as well as the use of topics to which they feel attracted to, will bring significantly positive outcomes, not only regarding motivation but also academic results. The problem that teachers tend to face is the lack of eagerness to learn the language, since if they do have the predisposition to do something, they will not do it. Given the circumstances, teachers need to try to achieve that they enjoy with the learning process. This situation, despite seeming utopian, is attainable, and this will be proved by theoretical research, innovative proposals and activities designed with the crucial goal of fostering students' motivation.

KEYWORDS: Motivation, attitude, English as a foreign language (EFL), English language teaching (ELT), innovation, willingness, language acquisition (LA).

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it cannot be denied that successful communication is essential to everyone. It is an integral part in the development of any living being, which is born from the fundamental need of exchanging information, knowledge or emotions. When a child is born, he/she acquires his/her first language due to this urgent necessity to ask for what he wants, to interact with his environment and to feel identified with a group. This survival instinct makes possible that almost everyone is successful in first language acquisition. In contrast, the process of learning a foreign language is radically distinct. Children are not surrounded by the target language, and they are only exposed to it in primary and secondary schools, universities, language centres or private lessons, so it could be established that there is a frequent lack of real immersion. They live in a context where their mother tongue is more than enough to communicate, so the need to interact with other people does not have any effect when learning a foreign one. In the light of this scenario, another way to stimulate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners should be explored.

Up to this point, it is worth mentioning the importance of three indispensable conditions that make possible any language learning process. These language learning requirements are: input, output and feedback. In general terms, input would be the oral or written information in a determinate language to which the learner is exposed. This information is processed by the human brain, and part of it is assimilated. This acquired input is known as intake, and makes possible the production of language, known as output, which is another of the three conditions in LA (Language Acquisition). Finally, learners need to be aware of the accuracy and correctness of their written or oral production and to notice their mistakes, as well as to receive some comments on how to improve their production. Such process is known as feedback. Besides these three conditions, it is also remarkably important to highlight the role of the affective filter of learners, which deals with their attitude towards the target language and their motivation to learn it. However, it seems that the huge convenience of fostering these aspects, which are crucial to be successful in the acquisition of any field of knowledge, tends to be ignored by teachers (Dörnyei, 2007).

The term “motivation” could be defined as “a social value that emphasizes a desire for excellence in order to attain a sense of personal accomplishment” (Rogers and Svenning, 1969:1). In simpler terms, it is a force that leads people to voluntarily achieve a goal. Accordingly, the activation of such force should be taken into account when trying to attain any objective, mostly when the purpose is such a complex task as learning a language is. Motivation, thus, should not be forgotten when developing any type of teaching.

Nowadays, it is undeniable that the study of English in Spain has not brought very positive results since its implementation at the end of the 19th century. Even though students are taught EFL (English as a Foreign Language) along primary and secondary school from an early age, evidence shows that at the end of secondary school they are rarely able to have a fluent conversation. The main reasons that may justify this linguistic failure in English acquisition in the Spanish scenario could be the high number of students per group, the poor promotion of oral skills and the lack of a real linguistic immersion. Still, in spite of the truthfulness of these arguments, would not it be easier to try to achieve that students actually want to learn a language?

The present situation should be a starting point to make teachers aware of the relevance of considering motivation a key factor in ELT (English Language Teaching). It is outstandingly important to manage that students realise about the advantages of learning a language, as well as to cope with their interests and try to make them enjoy with the process. Motivating learners is a complex task that goes further than the mere achievement of making them want to chase a goal. It is not a measurable substance that can be calculated or assessed. Motivation is a psychological factor that needs to be constantly fostered. Teachers should take into account the topics that students feel attracted to, and try to appeal to their interests and curiosities. They need to design innovative materials or modify those already created in order to catch their attention and captivate their minds. The fact that something has always been done in a specific and fixed way should be more than enough to awake the desire of changing it. EFL instructors need to explore and consider all these factors and try to adapt or even radically transform the materials they use and the way in which they teach.

Motivating students is a main concern if any goal is expected from them, mainly if this goal is as complex as acquiring a language is. Without motivation, as Gardner (1968) claimed, “even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency”. Although this psychological factor might not be a panacea that will automatically ensure the success in the learning of a foreign language, it could be the spark that ignites the engine of such process. If learners have a positive attitude towards the acquisition of the target language, most of the drawbacks that justify the failure in ELT in Spain mentioned before will not be such a great obstacle any more. Despite seeming utopian, offering students the chance of learning a language while being pleased on so doing does not have to be an unreachable fantasy. This idea, as well as the real possibility of attaining this objective, will be further developed and proved during the present work, which will make readers reflect upon the essentiality of enhancing motivation in EFL teaching.

2. ON THE USEFULNESS OF MOTIVATION

2.1. *Motivation as a psychological component: dichotomies*

2.1.1. *The Socio-educational Model – Instrumental and integrative motivation*

According to Gardner's Socio-educational Model (1982), whose development took place during his study of motivation as an influencing factor in L2 acquisition, the link between learners' motivation and language proficiency achievement could be divided into two major dichotomies: Instrumental and Integrative motivation.

- Instrumental motivation would be, as Hudson (2000) claimed, "the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language". This type of motivation is based on gaining any social or economic goal, such as getting a job, a higher salary or even good marks at school or university studies.
- Integrative motivation would be the learners' positive attitude to become part of the target language group of speakers. That is, the force that moves the learner to achieve proficiency in a foreign language because of the necessity of communicating in a given foreign scenario and feel linguistically and culturally identified with such context.

Both types of motivation have numerous advantages that may be taken into account when teaching a foreign language, but they also have some drawbacks to be taken into consideration. Even though the convenience of instrumental motivation is undeniable, the motor of learning a language would be, in this case, justified by a highly materialistic interest, which could not be advisable to be fostered in groups of young learners. Integrative motivation, on the other hand, is expected to bring more positive results. As Falk (1978:3) suggested:

"It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used".

Still, it is important to mention that this branch of motivation might not work when dealing with students that do not know yet where will they live or work.

2.1.2. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

This second dichotomy is characterised by involving reaching a goal by the outside in the case of extrinsic motivation, and from the inside of the individual in the case of intrinsic motivation. In this sense, this distinction would be closely related with the previous dichotomy, as “it could be assumed that extrinsic motivation is somehow related to instrumental motivation and intrinsic motivation is related to integrative motivation” (Heidari and Naseri, 2011:2). Nevertheless, there are several differences worth to mention.

On the one hand, extrinsic motivation is connected with the performance of any behaviour with the goal of earning a reward, avoiding a punishment or getting any recognition or gratitude from the outside. Some examples could be: studying to get a good mark rather than knowledge, doing some housework to avoid being told off by parents or being rewarded, or competing in a sport or contest because of the price. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation involves engaging in any activity with the goal of gaining personal enrichment and self-satisfaction rather than any external reward. In this case, some examples would be seeking the obtaining of knowledge when studying rather than just a good mark or playing a sport because of enjoying it and not to earn a price. In short, extrinsic motivation would be connected with the fact of fulfilling an objective with the expectation of obtaining a price or good mark, while learning a subject just because of being interested about it or due to the willing to gain knowledge would underlie intrinsic motivation.

The consideration of this second dichotomy in EFL teaching could be more convenient than the one proposed by Gardner (1985) in his Socio-educational Model. It needs to be taken into account that, in this situation, the ones to be motivated are learners aged up to 18 years old. In most cases, these students are too young to be concerned about learning a language with the aim of getting a higher payment or to be sure that they will live abroad for the rest of their lives. However, trying to motivate them by means of pricing them when obtaining good results and try to achieve that they want to learn to gain knowledge is a better objective that, unlike the previous one, is beyond the reach of teachers.

2.1.3. Language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation

The two dichotomies previously mentioned are the mainstream when referring to motivation as a psychological component, as they involve the general behaviour of people when seeking to fulfil any goal. Although they should be taken into consideration in the field of language acquisition, they just involve generic motivation. When dealing specifically with motivation in EFL teaching, the dichotomy that should be mainly considered would be language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation.

The present distinction was also considered by Gardner (1985) in his Socio-educational model, as well as by other authors such as Clément (1980) and Dörnyei (1994). Language learning motivation could be simply defined as the individual motivation to learn and acquire a second language, due to any personal reason. Meanwhile, classroom learning motivation would be the willing to learn a language in a classroom situation or any other learning specific context. According to Gardner (2007), this second type would be highly influenced by the teacher, the class atmosphere, the course content, the materials, tools and facilities used, as well as the personal characteristics of the students. The differentiation between these two last types of motivation is paramount for being successful at motivating language learners.

Provided that teachers rarely have the possibility of influencing students' language learning motivation, the motivational variant mainly taken into account in the present work will be classroom learning motivation. Usually, they can neither foster learners' integrative or instrumental motivation, nor their intrinsic or extrinsic one. Still, they have the chance of facilitating classroom learning motivation. If they are eager to do so, they have the opportunity to deal with topics that students like, to propose creative activities, to use materials that they might feel attracted to, to recreate situations with which the students can feel identified, to work with songs, videos and film fragments and to try to achieve that learners enjoy and even love the foreign language acquisition process.

2.2. Views for and against classroom learning motivation

The role of motivation in education, due to its numerous advantages, has always been a winning horse when it comes to academic success (Deci et al. 1991), (Dörney, 2007), (Gardner, 2010). Its convenience, however, is usually forgotten and a significant number of students feel unmotivated and are not keen to continue with their studies, a situation that tends to lead to academic failure or an early school leaving. Currently, as regularly claimed by the media, academic failure has become a popular issue in Spain. As reported by García de Blas (2013), Spain is on the top of the list of countries in the European Union of school drop-out rates. According to her study, a 23.5% of Spanish teenagers had an early school leaving in 2012. This percentage is twice as high as the European average, which according to a *Eurostat* report of that same year consisted of an 11.9%.

Although Spain has presented worst results in reports of other years, this data is still too high to be ignored and deserves an action plan. Nowadays, young learners have more distractions than other generations ever had due to the massive expansion of technology among other causes. During their everyday lives, they spend hours surfing the Internet, playing videogames, watching television or using social networks and cell phone chats. All these distracting factors, by far much more appealing for them than any subject taught at school, are great obstacles in the achievement of making them feel interested in their studies. Nevertheless, they could be used as a helping hand to motivate them during any learning process, mainly when talking about EFL teaching, which always allows more freedom when preparing the lessons. In my view, “if you can't beat them... join them”.

Despite the truthfulness of this evidence, most teachers seem to turn a blind eye to it and blame the students, claiming that if they do not want to study, there is nothing left to be done. In fact, they are right. If a student hates a subject, it would be extremely difficult to manage that he achieves good results. However, we cannot blame them and throw in the towel. We can use all these distractions that are so attractive to them and turn them into advantages instead of obstacles. We cannot expect that they prefer studying rather than spending time with social networks, chats and videogames.

Nonetheless, we can get profit of the situation by modifying materials or creating new ones by means of including some characters of films or games that they like, giving them texts about social networks or even about friendship or love stories about people who met on the Internet. Due to the increasing knowledge of students about new technologies, we can also include the ICTs in the learning process, which could be highly fruitful as long as it is appropriately controlled by the teacher.

Apart from this techniques, which can be easily implemented in the creation of materials and handouts to be used in any lesson, there are other ways to motivate and encourage learners to continue with their studies and to make them feel that they are capable of it. As Vaello (2007) proposes, the objectives of the course should always be crystal clear from its beginning, as well as the possibility of their accomplishment regarding the students' level. Teachers have to evaluate what they ask to be done, and value the effort of those who do it. Learners should always get their achievements priced and, in so doing, teachers must take into account their level of ability, because they cannot be as demanding with some learners as with others. Pricing their good results is a key factor to achieve improvement and an appetite to learn.

On the other side of the coin, there are authors who criticise the role of motivation in education. For instance, Moreno (2012) claims that a student that does not look forward to the end of summer to start the classes is not only unmotivated, but he also has an excellent mental health. Up to this point, not only as a response to this statement but also as a paramount clarification about the topic of classroom learning motivation, it is important to point out that motivating students does not mean that they would prefer going to class or even doing homework rather than playing videogames or surfing the internet.

In fact, studying is an obligation and very few are able to perceive it as a hobby or a pleasure, and this is a reality almost impossible to change. The goal of enhancing motivation in any field of learning is not achieving that they make out of their studies a passion, because that would be a losing battle. Being successful at trying that they would rather study than spend time with their hobbies would be as easy as breathing

under the water. The aim of motivating students would be achieving that they simply enjoy with the learning process, or at least that they do not hate it.

This author also defends that learning is an obligation of every student, who should not depend on anyone's encouragement in order to achieve good results. He illustrates his claim by comparing it with the fact that a parent does not cook only when he is motivated, in the same way that a builder does not only construct the house he has been asked to the days he feels like doing it. However, it must not be forgotten that there is a difference between these people and primary or secondary school learners. In these cases, teachers have to deal with children or teenagers, who in most situations are not mature enough to realise about the importance of accomplishing some tasks although they have to fulfil them against their wills. Learners usually limit their focus at the present during these ages, and they need a higher incentive rather than the argument that the fulfilment of their duties will be fruitful in a distant future. It is undeniable that parents and teachers have to make students realise about the essentiality of their studies, but if they acquire knowledge throughout an attractive and entertaining method they will actually want to learn. As the popular saying defends, "where there's a will, there's a way".

English knowledge by its own does not make a good English teacher, as well as knowing History or Mathematics does not necessarily mean that you know how to teach. The most important matter to be taken into account by a proper teacher is that transmitting knowledge is not their only job, but also transmitting enthusiasm and interest for the subject. They need to make students feel confident and capable to achieve the goals expected from them. They should make them enjoy as much as possible the subject by creating engaging materials and using appealing tools regarding their age and interests. A possible way to discover the topics that they are attracted to would be giving them questionnaires, for instance, about their hobbies, the films and the music they like or the books they read (See appendix 1). Once done that, teachers can use their answers as a weapon to modify the activities in course books or the materials they use. Once having achieved that they are minimally hooked by the topic to be taught and that they feel capable to learn it, teaching will be a piece of cake.

2.3. Proposals for innovation in grammar, vocabulary and the four skills

All the arguments standing for motivation defended up to this point may seem utopian or at least difficult to attain. Therefore, this section will provide readers with real possibilities of enhancing motivation in EFL teaching, concerning the elaboration of materials and the use of techniques that can be undertaken in the teaching of every part of the language, that have been accordingly divided into: Grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking.

2.3.1. The teaching of grammar

The teaching of grammar is normally considered the most uninteresting part of the acquisition of a foreign language par excellence. This common belief is supported by the fact that grammar is customarily taught through repetitive gap-fill, multiple choice or matching activities. This type of exercises may present many benefits in terms of gaining language proficiency, but they can rarely be considered motivating.

Anyhow, the teaching of grammar cannot be avoided in a non-native learning context. Students do actually need to get through this type of activities in order to master the language. "Although there has been a lot of progress in English language teaching since the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), grammar instruction is still not integrated into the four skills but given separately" (Pekoz, 2008:2). Moreover, grammar also tends to be treated as an isolated item of the language instead of being associated with real life situations in which learners might use a determinate linguistic construction. Commonly, students find the study of grammar boring and useless, as they do not see the real contributions that it can have in an actual linguistic situation.

In order to overcome these problems, teachers should make them realise about the usefulness of learning the aimed grammar structures, and try to connect them with real situations in which they are widely used. An easy way would be to play film fragments or series episodes that contain some examples of such grammar construction, in order to make them see that it is important to go through these units because of the high usage of them in real conversations. The same could be done by

means of implementing activities based on novel fragments about topics that they may seem attracted to, since written proof will also be extremely useful to attain the goal of demonstrating that grammar is not just an isolated part of a language that needs to be covered for no apparent reason.

Finally, the use of cultural background to tackle grammar could also be very favourable, as teaching culture along with language is a very advisable practice (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003). As these authors defend, “language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture”. Grammar activities based on cultural knowledge could also be very motivating, as students tend to have some background knowledge about the aspects dealt with, which will allow that they feel more appealed by the task. A simple but effective example would be the activity in which they have to form sentences about curiosities of the main buildings of London proposed in one of the sessions of the teaching unit elaborated for the 3rd year of ESO groups (See page 31).

Another convenient technique to accomplish the same target would be that teachers propose situations in which they might need to use a specific verb tense, for example, and try to create situations and role-plays in the classrooms to reach such objective. For example, when dealing with modal verbs, the teacher can make the students work in groups, and propose a bunch of situations in which the students have to give advice to a person with a specific problem. Some examples would be to advise a friend who has got pregnant because of not using protection, to tell a classmate who is cheating on her girlfriend what he should do or to make recommendations to a friend who is being mistreated by her boyfriend.

These are topics that will catch the attention of teenagers, as this kind of taboo topics tend to be very attractive according to their ages and interests. They are situations that students might feel identified with, or at least feel that might happen to them. When putting themselves in these people’s shoes, they will use constructions such as “you should”, “you must” or “you have to”, as well as their negative variations, in order to persuade their friends to take a determinate decision.

These scenarios were proposed in an activity that I designed for the 2nd year of Bachillerato teaching unit (See appendix 7), which brought very positive results. Another example of this treatment of taboo topics was implemented in a spoken activity to deal with the third conditional, in which the students had to invent chained sentences resulting from a premise in which a student of the group went to a party and got too drunk (See page 42).

By associating grammar structures with real situations, they still use the grammar devices aimed in the unit, but in more real scenarios that seek to accomplish a dual function: Appeal to their feelings by means of treating topics that may awake their interests, and make them realise about the usefulness of acquiring such structures in order to be able to communicate in a given actual situation.

2.3.3. The teaching of vocabulary

Vocabulary instruction seems to be slightly more motivating than grammar teaching, since the people, objects or actions commonly designed by the terms to be learned tend to be accompanied by some simple colourful drawings in an attempt to look attractive for students. In this vein, it is irrefutable that the teaching of vocabulary has made a step forward in terms of motivation. It is also true that this visual technique is significantly more effective than the traditional association of words with their equivalents in the students' mother tongue (table - mesa). According to Duff (1994), translation is labelled as "boring", "uncommunicative", "difficult" and "pointless" and does not tend to work in language teaching.

Furthermore, making these translating-based comparisons we cannot be further of the emulation of the acquisition of a first language. The association of the terms with a visual representation or the real object they refer to is a much better way to assimilate vocabulary, since it is closer to the learning of their L1. In the same way a child learns that a ball is called "ball" because he points at it and his mother says it, it can be stated that we learn by nature from the association of words and the reality they represent.

With the purpose of trying to enhance a more natural (and also motivating) way of learning while teaching vocabulary, the use of images, flashcards or PowerPoint presentations becomes crucial. If students are asked to learn terminology related with the world of sports, such as the verbs “swimming”, “climbing” or “playing football”, they will probably have some schematic images of drawn characters performing these actions. These will probably not work, due to their lack of captivation and innovation. However, in order to catch their attention, teachers could create a digital presentation in which learners have to say the actions that famous athletes are doing. This technique was highly used in the teaching units created for this study, such as in the film genres explanation (See page 28) or in the presentation about vocabulary related with the elaboration of films (See page 33).

By means of this methodology, we would be appealing to learner’s hobbies while they acquire the desired words or phrases. The same can be done with characters of films or series performing a determinate action, or ask them to describe famous people clothes (or even cartoons’). It would be as productive to make them describe a man and a woman in the course book as the characters of the Simpsons, for example. The triple association of the teaching of vocabulary, images and student’s hobbies will be in most cases a complete success when trying to catch their attention and make them feel more enthusiastic about their learning.

2.3.3. Reading

The aim of this section is to overview the main advantages of enhancing motivating intensive reading materials, as well as the convenience of the implementation of extensive reading in EFL instruction. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the difference between these two types of reading before moving on to this issue.

Intensive reading is the practice of going through a text in a very careful way and paying a lot of attention to all words, with the goal of understanding the precise meaning of the composition. An example of intensive reading would be the typical reading activities that can be found in course books, in which students have to ensure that they have fully understood it because later on they will have to deal with some

comprehension questions. Extensive reading, however, consists on reading for pleasure. Learners read whole novels, journals, magazines or any type of literature with ludic intentions. After so doing, they do not have to do any activities to check whether they have understood it or not.

With the goal of spreading motivating intensive reading in EFL learning, teachers can choose articles about topics that students find appealing. An example could be the article called “The Magical Success of Harry Potter” used in the 3rd of ESO teaching unit of this work (See appendix 2). Another advantageous practice could be using pieces of real literature that could be attractive for their students. By doing so they can provide them with intensive reading tasks, but they could achieve that students find the text so appealing as to buy the novel and go on reading it. Using literature in the EFL classroom tends to bring many benefits, and it could also be a saliently motivating practice. As Clandfield (2004) states:

“Literature is motivating. Literature holds high status in many cultures and countries. For this reason, students can feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a piece of highly respected literature. Also, literature is often more interesting than the texts found in course books”.

If a teacher knows that students are interested in a determinate topic, he could look for a book about it and choose an attractive fragment. If learners find this piece of real literature appealing or thrilling, they might be hooked enough to want to go on and read the whole work, so we would be fostering extensive reading.

The advantages of extensive reading are numerous. The main one relies on the fact that, as students are reading for pleasure, we are appealing to the affective filter of the language learning process. By reading texts that they find interesting, learners’ motivation is increased. Besides these affective benefits, extensive reading also enhances that students read more amount of information in the target language. The reason is that instead of a short text, for instance, they go through a whole book.

It should not be forgotten that the more amount of input received the better, and students will find many more unknown words to acquire. Furthermore, if they are

reading something that they are interested in, they will probably be familiar with the topic, which allows them to be able to learn the meaning of some new terms by inference. This autonomous way of learning also offers a vast number of benefits, due to the fact that having the tools to guess the meaning of a word from its context will always be more productive than learning it by heart. This practice is fundamental, because nobody can ever know the meaning of all the words in a language.

Moreover, if it is achieved that learners read for pleasure, they will be learning vocabulary and grammar while being motivated and attracted by what they are doing. Finally, apart from all these advantages, students would also enjoy a huge number of stories while enriching their knowledge in the target language. It is thus undeniable that learners will be more motivated by doing so than by facing compulsory readings, and motivation is a crucial factor in any learning process that should never be forgotten. As George R.R. Martin, the famous writer of 'A Game of Thrones', stated in his website (www.georgerrmartin.com), "a reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one".

2.3.4. Listening

The role of oral comprehension is fundamental in EFL instruction, since apart from the teacher's voice, it is often the only source of spoken input that learners receive. As it has already been commented in the present study, the exposure of students to useful input has a crucial function, due to the fact that the acquisition of a foreign language can never take place without at least a partial immersion. In addition, if teachers would use other materials rather than the usual recordings included in course books, listening activities could also have a determinant role at targeting classroom learning motivation.

Frequently, students are exposed to dialogues, interviews or TV shows simulations that tend to concern out of date ordinary topics that students find unquestionably unattractive. This may cause that they lose their attention and do not listen to the recordings. When using these materials, teachers should try to catch their attention before the activity is done. For instance, a pre-task talk about the topic is extremely

useful. If the students have an idea about the topic that is going to be handled in the listening exercise, they will not only be more motivated and pay more attention, but they will also achieve better results because they will be able to guess more words from context and comprehend its whole essence.

Furthermore, for example, if there is a listening activity about how special effects in films are created, it could be a good idea to find a short video on the Internet about how the animation of a film they like was produced. As teachers will manage to catch their attention from the beginning, learners will probably be more focused and understand a higher amount of words if they already are familiar with the topic dealt with, and even more if they are attracted to it. This idea was implemented in a listening activity proposed in the 3rd year of ESO course work, in which the students had to hear a recording about an animal coordinator (See page 33).

Another highly effective technique is the use of songs and fragments of films or series episodes to create listening tasks. One of the mainstream hobbies regarding teenagers is listening to music, going to the cinema and watching TV shows. For instance, when teaching vocabulary about crime, we can use a fragment of a detective film or series that contains a significant amount of related terms. Once more, if teachers bring their main sources of entertainment to class, they will perceive English learning as an engaging and stimulating process. Depending on the grammar or vocabulary unit, we can choose a scene of a film, a series episode or a song connected with them. There are songs about topics as diverse as vocabulary or grammar units are. For example, when we target modal verbs, we can use a song in which the singer expresses regrets or gives advice to someone, such as the song “You should’ve said no” used in a listening task created for the 3rd year of ESO teaching unit (See Appendix 4).

Even speeches uploaded in websites or TV shows about emotional themes that may touch or inspire them could have a great effect. An example would be a listening task I designed for a teaching unit in the 2nd year of Bachillerato groups, in which the students had to watch a motivational speech given by Elizabeth Velasquez, also known as “The ugliest woman in the world” (See appendix 6).

Moreover, this type of listening activities could be even more useful when teaching grammar. There are many films introduced by a voice-over talking using the past tense (*any period drama film*), the conditional (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*) or in the passive (*300 – The film*). The introductory scene of this last one was used for a listening activity in two 3rd year of ESO groups (See appendix 3).

Furthermore, there are a lot of TV-shows about the everyday life of the characters that bring about infinity of dialogues that contain structures related with any grammar goal to be assessed, such as giving advice, making regrets, complaining, expressing hypothetical situations or talking about routine. Lastly, the use of songs becomes once more outstandingly helpful, as lots of them include phrasal verbs, conditional statements, idioms, direct and reported speech, modals or any type of verb tenses.

As it can be seen in this section, the treatment of the listening skill could be the one that opens more doors when aiming to motivate students. Although teachers need to invest some time looking for videos or recordings that contain words or structures in line with the grammar or vocabulary goals to be assessed, results will be undoubtedly better as learners will be more focused in the task. They will be watching films or TV series episodes and listening to music at the same time they learn. If they are enjoying with the teaching process, it will be certainly easier to foster that they actually want to learn.

2.3.5. Writing

The practice of writing could be labelled as a considerably unpopular skill among students. Customarily, at the end of each course unit, learners are asked to write a specific topic-based composition of a fixed length. They also have to hand it in to the teacher, who usually gives it back a week or even more time later with a large amount of crossed out expressions corrected in red. This traditional treatment of the writing skill could be considered the most harmful for students' motivation towards the English subject, since they might think they have learned a lot during the unit but then they receive a bleeding text with a numeric mark and critical comments about their mistakes.

Error correction might become a major threaten if we want to spread a positive attitude towards the language in the classroom. The marking of all the errors, a numeric mark and a compilation of disapproving observations against the learner's writing style and use of the language will have few effect with teenagers, because they will possibly feel discouraged and have a loss of interest in the subject rather than trying to correct his/her mistakes. As Truscott (1996) defends, many studies carried out show the evidence that grammar correction does rarely work. Such researchers compared the writing of students who had received corrections in their compositions over a period of time with those that had not. According to his claim, there were not salient differences in the writing style of the first group, which would be proof of the ineffectiveness of the role of grammar correction.

However, his view might be too dramatic. Without making students realise about their errors, there will be no room for improvement. Usually, their exposition to the language is limited to the English classroom, so if there is a word written incorrectly or an inappropriate structure, this will continue happening until the learner is told to correct that. Therefore, the problem would be in the way correction is provided by teachers. We can still mark the errors committed, but we have to try to correct only those that the student can fully understand or that have been seen in class. If a student has a low level and tries to use a structure that has not been covered yet, telling him how to write it properly would be totally fruitless. In addition, the classic use of a red pen for correcting purposes should be replaced, for instance, by a green one. Students will notice the mistakes marked, as they habitually write with blue or black ink, but the visual impact would probably be less damaging for their self-esteem. Finally, a significantly alternative for conventional grammar correction would be providing negative but also positive feedback.

This feedback should be personal, and if teachers want it to be effective they will have to give back the compositions as soon as possible, because otherwise the student will have forgotten what he has written many days ago. We should mark the mistakes and write the appropriate form or use a determinate code to make them realise about which would be the correct alternative, but we also should price their efforts. This

could be as easy as writing comments along their compositions such as. *“That’s right!”* *“Great job!”* or *“You’ve got that!”*, or even write next to a determinate sentence expressions like: *“Well done, you used the passive here!”*.

Lastly, another effective method could be giving them freedom up to an extent at choosing the topic to write about. As long as it is related with the grammar unit or the terminology studied in that unit, listening to their proposals could be advantageous. Giving them the possibility of making choices about the tasks they will have to face will always bring very beneficial results in terms of fostering a positive attitude towards the learning of the language. In addition, we can also enhance a development of their creativity by making them include their pieces of writing in a poster, for instance, or asking them to include images or self-made drawings in their compositions. This visual bonus will be a highly convenient incentive and will likely have a very beneficial effect on their motivation towards the proposed writing tasks.

The most effective technique would be asking for a first draft that will be corrected by the teacher. In this situation, students will also get corrections, as it traditionally happens. Nonetheless, these corrections would be more similar to pieces of advice given by the teacher to help them to improve their writing for the final version. Although seeming minimal, there is actually a huge difference at changing this correcting style from a text with whole lines crossed out and a mass of mistakes marked in red to a list of tips to be improved. In this second case, they will realise about their mistakes for sure, because they have to write a second composition to be handed in as the final assessment. If they have to hand in only one version as it commonly happens, they will only have a glance at the whole text and limit their focus at the mark obtained. As it can be appreciated, this new approach to handle the writing skill would be capable of bringing more positive results in terms of motivation towards the English subject and language proficiency as well.

This technique was used in the writing task about film reviews proposed for the 3rd year of ESO groups in the teaching unit. They were asked to write a first draft, which was delivered to me and corrected in green taking into account all these considerations. They received negative but also positive feedback, with encouraging

comments about their writing skills or use of vocabulary and grammar in order to benefit their self-confidence. Once done that, they were asked to rewrite the film review without the pointed mistakes and hand in a final draft included in a poster with images of different scenes of the film with footnotes in the passive (See page 32).

2.3.6. Speaking

Lastly, speaking could be considered a very useful skill to foster learner's motivation. Nonetheless, students usually have a passive role in the classroom, since in many cases they do not tend to participate orally during the lessons. The teacher is often the main agent, while the learners are limited to hear the explanations and avoid expressing their opinions. This lack of participation could be reversed by bringing abundant speaking activities, since a higher participation and an active role of the students would be the perfect weapon to fight boredom and the loss of interest during the classes.

In spite of these arguments in favour of the fostering of speaking in EFL, it is undeniable that there tends to be a significantly poor promotion of oral skills in English teaching. This situation is frequently justified by the lack of time to cover all the aspects strictly specified by the curriculum, and because of the number of learners in each group. Classrooms in secondary schools tend to hold an excessively high number of students that complicates the process of learning, since the teacher cannot provide useful feedback when having over 30 pupils to pay attention to. They are able to perform oral exercises in groups or pairs, but the teacher cannot detect their mistakes, correct them when convenient or even ensure if they are actually performing these activities. Furthermore, teachers also need to face the fact that students are afraid of speaking. However, this could be a consequence from a reality in which students are not often asked to speak, which leads us to a situation in which the snake bites its own tail. If nobody tells them to speak, they will not do it, and if they do not do it they will be afraid of it.

In addition, course books usually propose very artificial speaking simulations in which students usually limit themselves to read or answer in monosyllables. These exercises

usually bring about unrealistic linguistic situations, in which they only need to change a determinate word or short phrase, produce isolated words or reading some questions that their partners can answer with one or two words. In most of the cases, there is not actual interaction, they do not talk about topics they might find interesting and real communication does not take place. Thus, the resulting drawbacks from the present treatment of the development of speaking in the EFL classroom could be summed up in the following: students are not offered the chance to speak freely since the proposed situations are extremely guided and deal with imposed topics that rarely appeal to their interests, which does not take into account their previous knowledge and damages their motivation toward English language learning.

As a matter of fact, taking into consideration students' interests and ways of thinking when dealing with the speaking skill is paramount. There are many ways to create oral situations that deal with topics they may like. For instance, when studying the second conditional, we should forget about the typical example traditionally offered in many text books: *"What would you do if you win the lottery? If I won the lottery, I would..."*. Instead, we can propose a dialogue in which a student is asked for advice by a friend that is cheating on his/her boyfriend or girlfriend, or a situation in which they have arrived to the school and a teacher has been killed. They can talk about what they would do by means of using the second conditional, but they will be speaking about topics that are innovative or captivating for them.

The teaching units for 3rd year of ESO and 2nd year of Bachillerato were created aiming to have a significant impulse of the treatment of speaking. Many of the activities created were asked to be performed orally. Moreover, speaking was tackled in the grammar activity mentioned above in which students had to imagine hypothetical situations and give advice to a friend with a problem (See appendix 7). It was also dealt with in an activity undertaken in both courses in which students had to come to the blackboard to describe a film that had to be guessed by their classmates. This exercise was done with the help of some cards with the name of different films with clues to be described in the case of the 3rd year of ESO groups (See page 30), while the students of 2nd year of Bachillerato did not have any help (See page 43), except of the condition of using relative clauses in their descriptions (as it was the grammar structure dealt with

during that lesson). Finally, the 3rd year of ESO students were also asked to perform dialogues that emulated authentic situations. In the first one they had to imagine that they planned to buy a film for a friend's birthday and they had to decide which one they should choose, while in the second one they had to imagine that they were meeting to go to the cinema and they had to decide the film they wanted to watch. The day after this session, it was a student's birthday, and this was used as an incentive to make them realise about the importance of mastering grammar structures and vocabulary for communicative purposes.

In addition, when they asked grammar or vocabulary doubts during theoretical explanations, the topics that came up were discussed in English instead of ignored as it customarily tends to happen due to the fact that creating debates is too time consuming. Before starting any activity, they were always asked about their opinions and feelings towards the topic (such as in Elizabeth Velasquez motivational speech), giving them the opportunity of expressing themselves and having voice. This enhanced the opportunity of treating the speaking skill in a more natural way.

Nowadays, it is crucial to change the traditionally passive role of the students and make out of them the main factors in the learning process. The development of speaking is a perfect chance to attain this goal, and by limiting ourselves to follow course books with such extremely guided situations they are not learning to communicate, which is the main goal when learning any language.

4. TEACHING UNITS

TEACHING UNIT

Lights, Camera, Action!

3rd year of ESO

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1) Contextualisation

The present teaching unit was developed during my practicum in Sos Baynat secondary school, in Castellón. Within this period, which lasted approximately three months, I was allowed to teach two groups of third year of ESO during seven sessions. The first group (B), was formed by 15 students, from which 6 were boys and 9 were girls. The second group (C), was slightly less numerous (11 students), from which 5 were boys and 6 were girls. Most of them were 15 year old, except from two students in group B, who had repeated the previous year, and one more, who repeated the last year in her primary school.

All the sessions were observed by my tutor, Inmaculada Chiva, who had been the instructor during this Practicum. The classes took place in a classroom in the secondary school with a computer and a projector, which made possible the realisation of many of the activities proposed in my teaching unit.

The course book they worked with was “English in motion 3”, published by Richmond, and I was asked to cover the eight unit. It was entitled “Action!” and was focused on the world of cinema as a means to instruct related vocabulary and the grammar unit of the passive voice. From the very first moment, I did not want to make out of the book the main agent, as it traditionally happens. Although the topics were interesting and appealing for young teenagers, many of the activities contained out-of-date examples and most of the films used for reading and listening activities were old-fashioned. Still, the book was a handy tool due to the attractiveness of the topics dealt with and its connection with the curriculum. However, I used many extra materials, resources and practical activities with the aim of motivating them.

To do so, the students in both groups were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 1) on their opinions and feelings towards the English language and the EFL subject, as well as about the way through which they usually learned and practiced the language. In addition, they also had to answer questions related with their hobbies and the films, books or music they liked. This priceless information was eventually used to create this teaching unit.

2) Motivation

This teaching unit was elaborated as a need of dealing with a unit in the course book from a more attractive and appealing view, provided the main goal of my project is proving the usefulness of the role of motivation in the EFL classroom as a means to achieve language proficiency. With that aim, I developed a series of activities that sought to tackle grammar and vocabulary units, the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) and also cultural aspects, but through a motivational alternative to traditional book-based ELF teaching.

3) Objectives

Although the main objective of the activities included in this teaching unit was to enhance students' motivation and to prove its usefulness in EFL teaching, they seek to cover the following objectives:

1. The students learn vocabulary about film genres.
2. The students are able to use the passive voice in the affirmative and negative forms of the simple present and past.
3. The students are able to recognise the passive voice in an oral or written text.
4. The students are able to transform an active statement into a passive one and vice versa.
5. The students learn cultural aspects and background information about important buildings in London.
6. The students learn terminology of the semantic field of the elaboration of films, including jobs, actions and objects used in the development of such process.
7. The students develop their creativity and imagination through the elaboration of a poster with images of a film.
8. The students revise linking words that can be used in written compositions.
9. The students are able to elaborate a film review.
10. The students revise modal verbs and other constructions for giving advice.
11. The students are able to describe orally a film, give their opinion towards it and recommend its viewing by giving reasons.

4) Temporisation

3rd ESO B (3B): From the 30th of April to the 14th of May.

3rd ESO C (3D): From the 5th to the 19th of May.

*Session 0:

At the end of these sessions, in which the students were covering the last part of the last unit, the students were given the motivation questionnaires (Appendix 1)

APRIL (2014)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th
14 th Session 0	15 th	16 th Session 0	17 th (Easter)	18 th (Easter)
21 st (Easter)	22 nd (Easter)	23 rd (Easter)	24 th (Easter)	25 th (Easter)
28 th (Easter)	29 th	30 th 1 st S. 3B		

MAY (2014)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			1 st (Labour Day)	2 nd 2 nd S. 3B
5 th 3 rd S. 3B 1 st S. 3C	6 th	7 th 4 th S. 3B	8 th 2 nd S. 3C	9 th 5 th S. 3B 3 rd S. 3C
12 th 6 th S. 3B 4 th S. 3C	13 th	14 th 7 th S. 3B	15 th 5 th S. 3C	16 th 6 th S. 3C
19 th 7 th S. 3C	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd
26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th

5) Activities

1st Session:

To start with the unit, as a warm-up, students are asked orally about their opinions about films, how often they go to the cinema or watch films at home and about their preferences regarding film genres. Once done that, they are asked to make a list of film genres according to their previous knowledge as well as their intuition. The names are written in the blackboard by the teacher, and they are asked to write them down. After that, they see a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of film posters and they will have to say orally the genre (or genres) of each film. In order to appeal to their interests, all these films were taken from their answers in the questionnaire they completed.

Examples of films in the digital presentation



After this introduction to the topic, they have to work in pairs and speak during five minutes about the genres they like and those they don't, and give reasons for that. Meanwhile, the teacher supervises their conversations and offers help when necessary. When the time is over, some students are asked about their classmates' opinions, so that they use the first and third person.

When some of them have spoken, they play "The Film Game". In turns, they have to stand in front of the class and pick a card from a box without showing it. Each card has

the image and some information about most of the films they wrote in the questionnaires, such as the name of the director (so that they use the passive voice) or some clues about the plot. The students have to say the genre of the film and explain what it is about and, when a classmate guesses the name, he receives a point. Prior to the realisation of this exercise, they are given some advice about how to explain the plot of a film, such as the construction “It’s about...”.

In addition, this is also a great opportunity to introduce, in an indirect way, the relative clauses. This can be seen in the following example:

“The film is about a boy, who discovers that he is a wizard. He goes to a special school, where he learns magic. He has to find the Philosopher’s Stone, which...”

This grammar unit has not yet been covered by the students, and this will not happen until the following academic year. Still, they can practice it before receiving the appropriate explanation so that they will be familiar with its use.

Examples of cards elaborated for “The Film Game”

TITANIC  Director: James Cameron Poor man ♥ rich woman Ship - struck iceberg Lot of people died	FAST AND FURIOUS  Director: John Dahl A group of friends They go to Los Angeles They steal cars	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN  Director: Gore Verbinski A man who... The Black Pearl Dead men
THE SIMPSONS  Director: David Silverman A family that... Place they live → Pollution The father adopts a pig	THE HUNGER GAMES  Director: Gary Ross A girl participates in... It consists of... She ♥ with...	AVATAR  Director: James Cameron No more natural resources ...go to explore a... Human ♥ Native girl
	THE HOBBIT  Director: Peter Jackson A small man... Help a group of dwarves A dragon	SPIDER-MAN  Director: Sam Raimi Bitten by a spider Develops superpowers Enemy: Green Goblin

✓ **Competences tackled:** Linguistic, Social and Artistic competence.

2st Session:

The students are given a reading activity (Appendix 2). It consists of a brief article about the release of the last novel of Harry Potter, the popular saga written by J.K. Rowling that became the second most popular choice in the questionnaires. In order to refresh their memories about the last session, they are asked about the genres of this novel, and whether they prefer the books or the films. Before reading it, they are asked who the writer of the saga is. Then, the following sentence is written on the blackboard in order to introduce the passive voice.

"Harry Potter is written by J.K. Rowling"

Once the explanation about this grammar unit is finished, they are asked to transform it into the past simple, and then into the negative form. With the aim of practising this, some films are written in a right column on the blackboard, and some directors in a left column. The students have to say and write down sentences in the passive in the affirmative or negative form, depending if the combinations between both columns are true or not.

After that, they move to the article. They read it while they listen to the podcast, and then they have to look for the seven examples of the passive voice in the text. Once done that, they have to transform three active sentences in bold in the text into the passive voice. Finally, they move to the workbook and complete, saying the answers aloud in turns, some activities to practice this new structure and make sure they have understood it.

At the end of the lesson, as homework, they are told to write a short text about a film they like (without mentioning the name). They have to write the genre, the name of the director and the place where it was filmed (by using the passive voice) and a brief overview of the plot and the main characters.

✓ Competences tackled: Linguistic, Artistic and "Learning to learn" competence.

3rd Session:

At the beginning this lesson, the students read in turns for the rest of the class what they have written about the films they like, and the others have to guess the title. Each time they make a successful guess, they receive a point, which is written on the blackboard. When finished, the winner is announced.

With the aim of reviewing what they have learned during the previous session, the class begins with a PowerPoint presentation about important buildings in London. In order to catch their attention, they are asked whether they have visited or heard about any of them. Apart from introducing cultural background, it seeks to achieve that they talk about these architectural icons by using the present and the past tense in the passive voice. Each slide includes some clues about relevant facts in the history of each building, which they have to use to form passive sentences while learning about important facts in the history of the UK.

Examples of slides in the PowerPoint presentation



"London Bridge is located in river Thames. It was modified by John Rennie and it was opened to traffic in 1973. It was built by the Roman funders of London"

Once the activity is finished, students go to the course book to complete some activities about making sentences in the passive in both negative and affirmative forms, and in the simple present and simple past.

✓ Competences tackled: Linguistic, Digital and Cultural competence.

4th Session:

In order to continue with the passive voice, they watch a video that corresponds to the first scene in “300”, since the film is introduced using the past tense of the passive voice. The film, which also was a popular choice in the questionnaires, is meant to catch their attention and realise about the wide usage of the passive voice in English. They are given a worksheet (Appendix 3) with passive sentences to be completed while listening to the audio.



Once done that, they read a text about videogames based on famous films, which includes the basic steps of their creation as well as some reasons of their success. After reading it, they have to answer to some reading comprehension questions.

Finally, as homework, they are told to make a poster with a film review. To do so, they see an example and receive an explanation on how to write it, in terms of structure, style and information that should be included. Before sticking the review to the poster, they have to hand in a first draft, which will be corrected for the next session. After that, they re-write it and add it to their posters, which will also have to include some images taken from the film with a footnote with a sentence in the passive, as in the example. Then, they are told that they will have to perform a brief oral presentation about their posters in the seventh session.

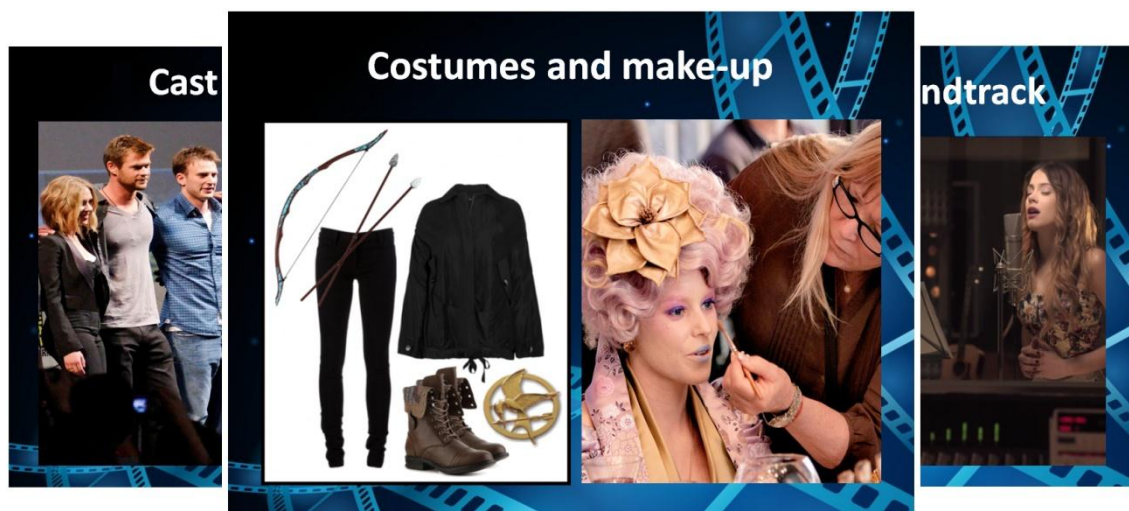


✓ **Competences tackled:** *Linguistic and “Learning to learn” Competence.*

5th Session:

Before starting, the students hand in the drafts. During this lesson, some vocabulary related to the elaboration of films is introduced by means of another PowerPoint presentation. With the double aim of making them feel attracted to the unit and also avoiding translation, students have to match the terms (cast, costumes, make-up, script, director, soundtrack and special effects) with the images in the slides.

Examples of slides in the PowerPoint presentation



Note: The terms on the top of the pictures do not appear until they guess them.

Once done that, they do a listening activity in the book. It consists of two dialogues taken from interviews to a script supervisor and an animal coordinator. However, before doing so, they watch a video of an animal trainer interacting with a lion, so that they feel engaged and become familiar with the topic. After listening to the recordings, they have to answer some questions in order to check whether they have understood the dialogues. To end up with, they are asked which of the jobs related to the elaboration of films would they prefer and to give reasons to justify their answers.

Capture of the video



✓ Competences tackled: Linguistic, Digital and Cultural competence.

6th Session:

In this second-to-last session, the students have to revise the modal verbs. With such aim, they are given the lyrics of the song “You should’ve said no”, by Taylor Swift (Appendix 4). They have to fill in the gaps with the modal verbs they hear while listening to it. After that, they do a listening activity in which they hear a sample dialogue about how to make recommendations.



After listening to it, they are given a list of useful expressions for such purpose. The class is divided into groups of four, and each one of them has five minutes to prepare a dialogue. The first group imagines that it is a friend’s birthday, and they have to buy a film. The second group has to face the same situation, but in this case, they have to buy a videogame. Lastly, the third group has to pretend that they want to go together to the cinema, but they do not agree on which film they should watch. When the time is over, they have to perform the dialogue they have prepared without reading their notes.

When the speaking activity is finished, they are given back their corrected drafts, so that they can elaborate the final ones at home and stick them to the posters for the following class, when they will have to expose them. They are given some comments about their mistakes, apart from the written positive and negative feedback they receive in their papers.

Finally, they are told that on the following session’s presentations they have to expose the poster they have made while explaining to their classmates (during 3-5 minutes, approximately) the genre of the film they have chosen, who was it directed by, some information about the plot and the main characters and the reasons why he or she would recommend it or not.

✓ Competences tackled: Linguistic, Artistic and Social competence.

7th Session:

During this last session, the students expose in turns their posters with the film reviews. When each of them finishes the presentation, they receive some negative and (mostly) positive comments about their speech and performance.

When they have all finished, all the aspects dealt with in this unit are reviewed for the exam and linked to each practical activity they have done. To end up with, they receive a brief questionnaire about their opinions and feelings towards the present teaching unit (Appendix 5).

✓ **Competences tackled:** *Linguistic and Social competence.*

6) Evaluation

Each academic term, the students are evaluated taking into consideration their outcomes concerning three units of the course. They have to read a short novel, which is evaluated by means of a written exam with comprehension questions, which is a 10% of the mark. Another 10% is devoted to attitude and participation, and another one to homework and compositions, while the remaining 70% of the mark corresponds to the exam of the three units dealt with in the term.

The present teaching unit corresponds to one unit of the term, so the participation in class, the homework, the film reviews handed in and the oral presentations were considered inside its correspondent 20% of the global mark of the term. The grammar contents learned could not be evaluated due to the fact that they did not take yet the written exam, since they still need to cover one more unit before the end of the course.

The key aspect taken into account when evaluating the film reviews and the expositions of the posters was the fact of delivering it. Then, the content in the speech and compositions received more importance than the grammar or lexical mistakes, as an excessive strict correction can damage students' self-confidence and motivation towards the English subject.

TEACHING UNIT

Course revision

2nd year of Bachillerato

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7) Contextualisation

Throughout my Practicum in Sos Baynat secondary school I was also allowed to undertake a teaching unit in two 2nd year of Bachillerato groups. The first one (2nd of Bachillerato A) was formed by 25 students, who had chosen the field of Science. There were 13 boys and 12 girls, and only two of them were repeating the year. Meanwhile, the second group (2nd of Bachillerato B) was a Humanities class formed by 34 students, from which 21 were girls and only 13 were boys. In this case, five students were repeating the year.

All the sessions were also observed by Inmaculada Chiva, my supervisor during this Practicum. The classes took place in the usual class of each group, where they receive most of the classes. However, two sessions of this Teaching Unit were developed in one of the two ICTs classrooms in the secondary school, which was equipped with a computer and a projector, which made possible the viewing of the two videos proposed.

Both groups used the course books “Get it right” for 2nd of Bachillerato, published by Oxford University Press. In this case, I was asked to cover the last unit of the book, which consists of a revision of all the contents studied during the year through the topic of “Happiness”. Still, the book was only handled as a supportive material and they only used it to do some activities to ensure they have understood the explanations and were able to use the vocabulary and grammar units reviewed. With the aim of avoiding a traditional book-based approach and appeal to their interests and try to motivate them, I also used videos and hypothetical real world situations to go through this revision unit.

2) Motivation

This teaching unit was born from the actual need of reviewing the contents dealt with in their last academic year of their secondary education, before facing the University Entrance Exams and enrolling in different degrees in the University. Moreover, it also seeks the exploration and reflexion upon some moral aspects of our everyday lives, such as the importance of optimism, tolerance and happiness.

Finally, it was also elaborated as a response of the need of avoiding that they perceive the study of the English subject as an artificial learning that will have no use in real life situations. With this target, all the grammar units present in this Teaching Unit have been tackled by emulating real life situations that they might face when travelling to another country. Nowadays, due to the Global economic crisis, many of them will have to live abroad, and English will be the vehicular language through which they will have to establish relations and solve situations. For this reason, it is remarkably important to highlight the connection between grammar and real world English, as well as to prepare them for actual situations that they may have to face.

3) Objectives

The main objective to be accomplished during this Teaching Unit was the revision of the grammar units that the students went through during the present academic year, due to the imminence of the University Entrance Exams. Another paramount goal was to motivate them and try to create links between the study of grammar and its actual uses in real world situations. Still, besides these general targets, the specific objectives to be pursued were the following:

12. The students learn vocabulary and ideas related with the topic of happiness.
13. The students are able to use and recognise any verb tense.
14. The students are able to form relative clauses and distinguish between defining and non-defining ones.
15. The students master the use of the passive voice with one or more objects in the affirmative and negative form of all verb tenses.
16. The students can differentiate and use the three (or four, taking into account the zero conditional) types of conditionals.
17. The students are able to use reporting verbs to use the indirect style.
18. The students are able to use and recognise modal verbs as well as their uses.
19. The students learn the use of different grammar units in real world language.
20. The students discuss and reflect upon the importance of happiness and self-acceptance in their lives, as well as some other moral messages connected with this topic.

4) Temporisation

2nd BACH A (2BA): From the 8th of April to the 2nd of May.

2nd BACH B (2BB): From the 14th of April to the 6th of May.

APRIL (2014)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
7 th	8 th 1 st S. 2BA	9 th	10 th	11 th 2 nd S. 2BA
14 th 3 rd S. 2BA 1 st S. 2BB	15 th 4 th S. 2BA	16 th 2 nd S. 2BB	17 th (Easter)	18 th (Easter)
21 st (Easter)	22 nd (Easter)	23 rd (Easter)	24 th (Easter)	25 th (Easter)
28 th (Easter)	29 th 5 th S. 2BA	30 th 3 rd S. 2BB		

MAY (2014)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			1 st (Labour Day)	2 nd 6 th S. 2BA 4 th S. 2BB
5 th 5 th S. 2BB	6 th	7 th 6 th S. 2BB	8 th	9 th
12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th
19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd
26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th

5) Activities

1st Session:

In this first session, the students watch a video called “How do you define yourself?”. It consists of a speech published in the global set of conferences website known as “TED”, under the slogan of “Ideas Worth Spreading”. It was performed in December 2013 by Elizabeth Ann “Lizzie” Velásquez, who is an American woman whose extremely rare medical condition led her to become a self-help book writer and motivational speaker. She was also known in the net as “The ugliest woman in the world”.



In her touching monologue, she shares her experiences with bullying and social marginalisation during her whole life, pursuing the goal of making people notice how we usually overvalue our problems and to realise about the importance of accepting what we are, through the idea that we should build our happiness day by day.

Once the video finishes, they are asked to share their opinions and feelings towards Lizzie’s talk, as well as to express which the message of her motivational speech is. After the debate, they are given a short explanation in order to refresh their memories about the structure and use of the grammar unit of reported speech. Then, they are given a sheet of paper (Appendix 6) with activities related to the video that tackle such unit. The reason of the connection between this grammatical structure and the video is that Lizzie always uses the direct style to explain to the audience what her family, her doctor and her acquaintances told her during her harsh life.

✓ **Competences tackled: Linguistic, Cultural and Social competence.**

2nd Session:

The second session consists of a revision of the three types of conditionals (four if the zero conditional is considered). To start with, the students are asked about the uses of each conditional in real life, and to say examples of each type. Then, they receive a short explanation about the usage, differences and structure of each conditional. After that, they are told to do some revision activities in the book, in order to check that they are able to differentiate them and construct these types of sentences.

Later, they are given a hand-out (Appendix 7) with some activities in which they have to form conditional statements and wishes from some sentences taken from the speech they watched during the first session. They are given the infinitive form in brackets of the verb they have to use whether in the affirmative or negative form.

In order to practice the third conditional, which can be assumed to be the most difficult one, a chained-sentences game is proposed. In this activity, a situation is given by the teacher using the name of one of the students, as in the following example:

"If Txema hadn't gone to the party last night, he wouldn't have got so drunk"

Then, one student is told to use the second part of the sentence to start a new one also in the second conditional, in order to create a chain of events.

"If he hadn't got so drunk, he wouldn't have cheated on her girlfriend in the party"

"If he hadn't cheated on her girlfriend in the party, she wouldn't have left him"

The main goal of the game is to make them realise about the wide use of these grammatical constructions when expressing ideas or feelings in real life. In addition, as they are using the name of one or many of their classmates, they may feel more engaged with the activity and even enjoy creating funny situations related with their main interests regarding their age, such as parties or love.

✓ Competences tackled: Linguistic and Social competence.

3rd Session:

The goal of this session is to refresh the use of the relative clauses. With that aim, they are asked about the relative pronouns they can remember and the differences among them. Furthermore, they are also asked about the properties of defining and non-defining relative clauses. Once more, they receive a brief theoretical explanation about this grammar unit before doing some exercises to practice and revise what they already know.

Once done that, with the objective of making them realise about the use of these sentences in real life, they are proposed to play a game. In this one, the students are taken in turns to the blackboard and have to explain the plot of a film or a novel without saying the title by means of using relative clauses. The others are supposed to guess the name, and each one of them who is successful with that receives a point. The main goal of this activity is fostering the use of relative pronouns in a real context as describing a film or a novel is.

"The novel is about a pirate who finds a mysterious map. He travels in a ship whose captain tries to murder him. He arrives to a desert island where..."

✓ **Competences tackled:** *Linguistic, Social and cultural competence.*

4th Session:

Throughout this session, the students revise the passive voice. As they have tackled them significantly recently during the year (it is the last unit they have studied) they are asked to practice it in an indirect way, that is, to recognise it in a given real context. However, prior to this, they are shown various newspaper headlines, in which they have to recognise it as well as to realise about its wide usage in the press.

After that, while the students watch the beginning of the film "300", they have to recognise and write down the passive sentences they find. The choice of this scene is justified by the fact that the film is introduced by a narrator who uses the passive voice in the telling of some historical events.

✓ **Competences tackled:** *Linguistic and artistic competence.*

5th Session:

This last session seeks to revise the modal verbs. At the beginning of the lesson, as usual, they are asked about which modal verbs they know and what for they are used (likelihood, advice, ability, permission and obligation). As customary, they also deal with some exercises in the book to practice the use of each phrasal verb and the structure of the sentences in which they appear.

When the exercises are finished and corrected, the students are told to work in groups of five. In this case, with the usual purpose of linking grammar units with real life situations, each group is given a hypothetical situation in which they are supposed to give advice to someone (Appendix 7). Some examples of situations could be:

1. To give advice to a friend who is cheating on her/his boyfriend/girlfriend.
2. To make recommendations to a girl that has got involuntarily pregnant.
3. To comfort and advise a girl who is being hit by her boyfriend.

The groups have to note down some ideas to prepare a dialogue that they eventually have to perform in front of the class, in which one of them is the person who needs advice and the others are his/her friends. Once more, the aim pursued is engaging them by tackling topics that they might consider attractive or feel identified with.

- Student A: You can't let him do that anymore. You should leave him.
- Student B: I know I have to do it... but I still love him. I just can't...
- Student C: C'mon, don't be silly. You must go to the police!

✓ **Competences tackled:** *Linguistic and social competence.*

6) Evaluation

As this was not a proper unit in the course, but a set of revision explanations and activities to refresh the grammar studied during the year before their University Entrance Exams, this teaching unit was not evaluated.

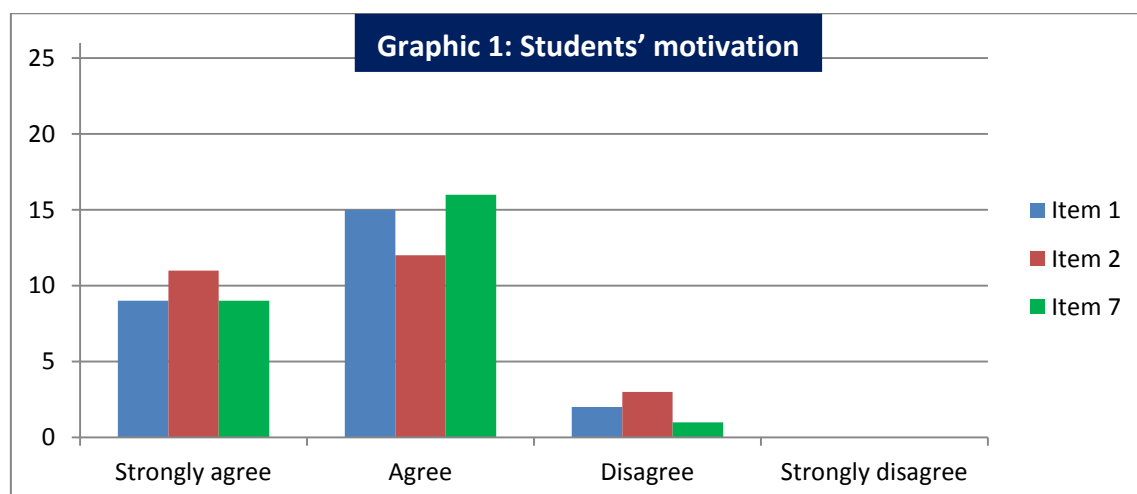
Still, the attitude and participation of the students during the explanations and the oral activities proposed are taken into account into a 10% of the mark in the term, which corresponds to the evaluation of such behaviour.

4. RESULTS

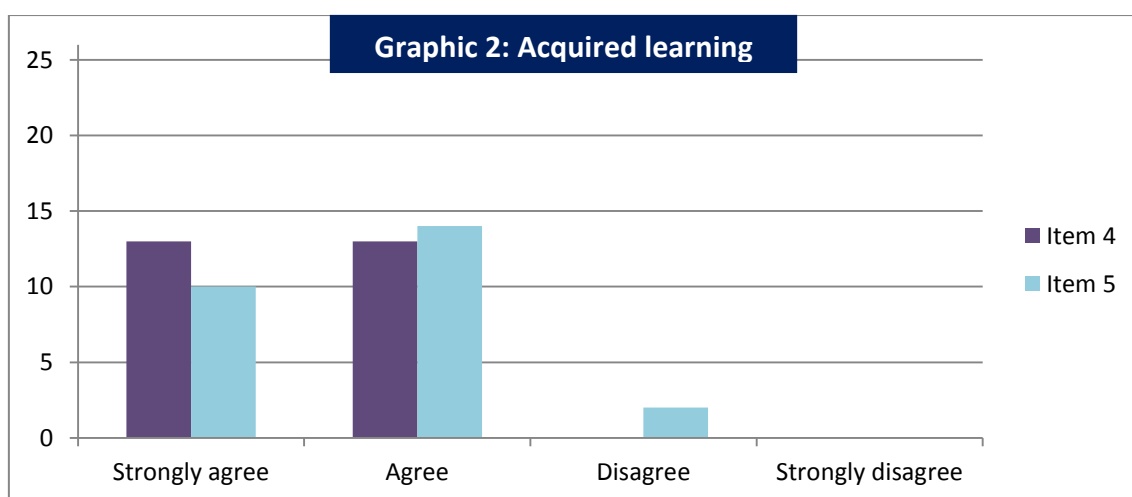
4.1. Findings and analysis

During this section, I will expose and comment the findings of my project according to the students' opinions. At the end of the last session of the two 3rd year of ESO groups, I gave them a questionnaire (See appendix 5) towards their feelings and motivation during my classes. Therefore, this analysis will be provided in regard to the student's answers and the comments that some of them wrote below. It is worth adding that these questionnaires were anonymous, as asking for their names might have had skewed the results obtained.

The questions were accordingly chosen in terms of their attitude towards the classes, the way of teaching and the attractiveness of the materials and sources used. Furthermore, they were also asked about their opinion about the learning acquired during this period. Some teachers might think that motivating students could be convenient in reference to enhancing a positive perspective towards the language, but results can be slightly worse. Thus, the decision of asking for learners' views in relation to both aspects was born from the need of refuting this myth. This is the reason why I also wanted to ask about language proficiency instead of limiting my findings to the fostering of motivation. As such, I included questions regarding their feelings about the activities, materials and teaching methodology, but also about their views towards their academic usefulness. This fact can be appreciated in the following sample graphics, elaborated taking into consideration the most relevant questions.



This figure was created by taking into account the questions 1, 2 and 7 answered by the 26 students of 3rd year of ESO in the questionnaire: “I think the activities done in class were interesting”, “The teacher has used attractive materials” and “The teacher has tried to motivate us”. As it can be observed, the findings were highly encouraging. 9 students said that they strongly agreed with the premise of considering the activities proposed interesting and 15 agreed with it, while only 2 considered the opposite. Their reactions for the second statement were similar, since 11 completely agreed with the attractiveness of the materials used while 12 agreed with it. Only 3 students refuted this idea. This is inarguable proof of how much they like using other materials rather than course books, and also of their appreciation of the work of a person who has tried to motivate them by means of enhancing a more innovative way of teaching that takes into account their interests and hobbies.



The graphic above, on the other hand, shows their opinions towards the linguistic knowledge acquired during the teaching unit implemented. It corresponds to the statements 4 and 5 in the questionnaire: “I think learning with videos, images and songs is useful” and “I think I have learned a lot during these classes”. As it can be seen in the figure, these results were also highly promising, as nearly all of them agreed or strongly agreed with these premises. Besides these findings, the teacher of the groups (Inmaculada Chiva) told me that most of them achieved very good outcomes in the sections corresponding to this teaching unit in the written exam of the term. In this vein, it could be claimed that fostering a more innovative way of teaching will bring very beneficial results, in terms of motivation but also academically speaking.

Last but not least, it is also worth pointing out the fact that 19 out of 25 students strongly agreed with the third statement in the questionnaire: "I liked using more materials apart from the book". The remaining 6 students, nonetheless, just agreed with it. Still, there was not a single student who was against such premise. On this basis, it could be affirmed that, despite their early age, learners actually express their eagerness to be motivated by teachers. They simply love working with more materials instead of going page by page throughout a course book during a whole academic year. Such encouraging results should be proof enough to believe in motivation as a key factor in EFL instruction. Through this study, it has been demonstrated that spreading a more innovative and entertaining way of teaching brings both, positive academic results and a far more positive attitude towards the language.

Using more tools and diverse teaching techniques would entail breaking the routine, and that is what they ask for. They want to be surprised while they learn, and the best way to achieve so would be using our imagination to go beyond the national curriculum, which teachers tend to use as an excuse to avoid spending time on the elaboration of their own materials. If they are openly asking for motivation, why should we deny it to them?

5. CONCLUSION

This project was originally born as a reaction towards traditional English teaching in Spain. Day by day, students go to class and work with frequently tedious course books that seem to have become the true teachers in the learning process. Experts claim that the most beneficial way to learn a language is living in the areas where it is spoken and having to face real situations. In spite of these undeniable arguments, learners study the language by completing gap-filling grammar activities, memorising vocabulary commonly taught through translation in their L1, reading adapted materials and listening to non-authentic situations about topics to which they do not have the slightest interest. Besides this poor handling of the “passive” skills of the language, their active ones are even more limited as they have to write a short composition for each unit and they are rarely encouraged by teachers to speak longer utterances than isolated words or effortless answers.

This view may seem too pessimistic and even catastrophic, but is not far from reality. As a response to this deficient method, learners are not only unable to have a fluent conversation in most cases at the end of Bachillerato. Additionally, some of them are so unmotivated with their studies that they want to drop them before finishing secondary school. Although many others have a positive attitude and are eager to learn, we cannot forget about those who need an extra push.

However, every cloud has a silver lining, and this is not an issue without a possible solution. Within this work, I attempted to propose different ways of teaching. Using supporting evidence by acknowledged authors and my own imagination and willingness to change things, I tried to prove that an alternative to this traditional way of teaching is possible. There are numerous ways to innovate in the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills. It is time to notice that letting the course book be the teacher does not entail favourable results. If we want to attain that they actually have a willingness to learn, which is paramount to achieve language proficiency, we have to realise that knowing the subject is not enough for teachers. We need to modify or even create from scratch the materials and tools that we are going to use in our lessons. As I suggested with the teaching units created for this purpose,

we can still use the course book, but we can combine it with brand new motivating activities that apply to their interests; the use of images, videos, films and songs to break the routine and enable that they enjoy with the subject; and active tasks that make them feel aware of the importance of acquiring grammar structures and vocabulary to implement them in real situations. I can guarantee that this methodology works, as they not only expressed their gratefulness in the questionnaires analysed in the results section, but also day by day during the classes. Thus, motivating students is possible. By achieving this, teachers will also be more motivated too, since their positive reactions and a higher participation will be extraordinarily encouraging. In fact, I can tell there is not a more rewarding experience than having students who enjoy with your teaching methodology and show a great interest towards your classes.

We must not transmit only knowledge, but also enthusiasm for the subject. We have to believe in what we do and what we teach, and infect our students with our passion. If we manage to make them feel them minimally interested in the subject, we will win the battle. Most of the times, bad outcomes are not necessarily obtained due to a lack of capacity, but to a lack of appetite to learn. This is the main reason why spreading a positive attitude towards the English language is crucial. Nowadays, taking into consideration the essentiality of the role of motivation in EFL teaching is a must that should not be longer ignored. As people say, “to want is to succeed”. Maybe they do not learn because they do not want to. Let us achieve that they want, and they will.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Motivation Questionnaire towards the English subject

3rd year of secondary school students



Questions	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
1. I like English as a language				
2. I like the English subject				
3. I like the type of activities we do in the English class				
4. I like working in groups				
5. I prefer doing other activities instead of the ones in the English book				
6. I think English is easy				
7. English is one of my favourite subjects				
8. We sometimes watch videos and listen to songs in class				
9. I think learning English is very important for my professional future				
10. I really want to learn English				

Students' interests

Questions	Answers
1. What's your favourite film?	
2. Write three more films that you like	
3. What's your favourite book?	
4. What's your favourite book saga? (The Hunger Games, Harry Potter, Game of Thrones)	
5. Write three more books that you like	
6. What's your favourite music style? (Pop, rock, rap, house...)	
7. What's your favourite singer/band?	
8. What's your favourite song?	
9. Which job would you want to have in the future?	
10. Which are your hobbies?	

Appendix 2

READING AND LISTENING TASK

The Magical success of Harry Potter

Somewhere in England, there is a very special building. The security is tight. There is barbed wire all around the fence. There are security guards with dogs. **Everyone going in or out is searched** and has to show a security pass. Is this a secret government defence establishment? Or a prison for specially dangerous prisoners? Or a place for storing something very valuable, like gold bars, or something very dangerous, like nuclear waste?



No, it is the warehouse where **copies of the new Harry Potter book** – “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” – **are stored**. Late tomorrow, big trucks will arrive at the warehouse. **The books will be loaded onto the trucks, and taken to bookshops and supermarkets all over the country**. Because Saturday is the Big Day. Saturday is the day when the new Harry Potter book will be published.

Who is Harry Potter? Did someone say, “Who is Harry Potter?” What planet do you live on? Everyone knows about Harry Potter. He is a teenage wizard, who attends a special school for wizards called Hogwarts. Together with his friends Ron and Hermione, he is locked in a desperate struggle with the forces of evil. J K Rowling’s books about Harry Potter are some of the most successful books ever written. **When the previous Harry Potter book was published, two million copies of it were sold in the first 24 hours**. This time, the publishers printed 3 million copies, and will print even more if the book sells well. And, of course, **the book will be translated into many other languages**.

So next Saturday – which is the first day of the school summer holidays in England – the new Harry Potter book will go on sale. People will queue to buy it at bookshops and supermarkets. In our family, we will need to buy 3 or 4 copies, because we cannot agree who should read the book first.

This will be the last Harry Potter book. So what will happen? Will Harry finally defeat the evil Voldemort? Or will the dark forces triumph? The excitement is intense. But we will not have to wait long to find out. Only one more day to go!

Appendix 3

The passive voice – Listening

300: THE FILM



1) Watch the introductory scene of the film.

2) Use the words in the box below to fill in the gaps.

baptise	born	teach	give up	take	inspect
---------	------	-------	---------	------	---------

When the boy _____, like all Spartans, he _____.

He _____ in the fire of combat.

He _____ never to retreat, never to surrender.

At age 7, as is customary in Sparta, the boy _____ from his mother.

The boy _____ for dead.

Appendix 4

"Should've Said No"

Taylor Swift

It's strange to think the songs we used to sing
The smiles, the flowers, everything is gone
Yesterday I found out about you
Even now just looking at you feels wrong

You say that you'd take it all back,
given one chance
It was a moment of weakness
and you said, "Yes."

[Chorus:]

You _____ 've said "No",
you _____ 've gone home
You _____ 've thought twice
before you let it all go
You _____ 've known that word,
with what you did with her,
Get back to me (get back to me).

And I _____ 've been there
in the back of your mind
I _____ be asking myself, "Why?"
You _____ be begging
for forgiveness at my feet...
You _____ 've said "No",
baby, and you _____ still have me

You _____ see that I've been crying
Baby, you know all the right things to say
But do you honestly expect me to believe
We _____ ever be the same?

You say that the past is the past,
you need one chance
It was a moment of weakness
and you said, "Yes."

[Chorus:]

You _____ 've said "No",
you _____ 've gone home
You _____ 've thought twice
before you let it all go
You _____ 've known that word,
with what you did with her,
Get back to me (get back to me).

And I _____ 've been there
in the back of your mind
I _____ be asking myself, "Why?"
You _____ be begging
for forgiveness at my feet...
You _____ 've said "No",
baby, and you _____ still have me

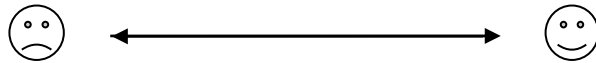
I _____ resist
Before you go, tell me this:
Was it worth it?
Was she worth this?
No... no, no, no...

[Chorus:]



Appendix 5

Motivation Questionnaire towards the activities done in class



Questions	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
1. I think the activities done in class were interesting				
2. The teacher has used attractive materials				
3. I liked using more materials apart from the book				
4. I think learning with videos, images and songs is useful				
5. I think I have learned a lot during these classes				
6. I liked the way the teacher explains				
7. The teacher has tried to motivate us				
8. I'm more motivated with the English subject				
9. I have enjoyed the activities done in class				

- Write some comments about your opinion towards these classes:

Appendix 6

Reported Speech

Elizabeth Ann "Lizzie" Velasquez

Motivational talk - Listening

What did Lizzie say?

The doctors told my parents, 'we just want to warn you to expect your daughter to never be able to talk, walk, crawl, think or do anything by herself'.

The doctor told her parents that...

The first thing they told the doctor was, 'we want to see her and we are going to take her home'

She thought, 'she is really rude'

My mum said, 'I've had a really difficult life but that's okay'

I had to ask my parents, 'what's wrong with me, what did I do, why don't they like me?'

And they sat me down and they said, 'Lizzie the only thing that is different about you, is that you are smaller than the other kids.'

So I told myself 'I'm going work my butt off to feel better'

Appendix 7

Lizzie Velasquez - Motivational talk

CONDITIONALS AND WISHES

1st Conditional

If you let your outer appearance define you, you (be) unhappy.

Unless you start being optimistic, you (reach) happiness.

As long as you are brave, your problems (be) smaller.

2nd Conditional

If I gave more importance to my problems, I (feel) miserable.

If I let people's bad comments affect me, I (spend) everyday crying.

If I (be) you, I would be less pessimistic.

3rd Conditional

If I (be) more beautiful, I would have had more boyfriends.

If I hadn't had the support from my parents and friends, I (feel) depressed.

If I (not google) it, I wouldn't have known how to become a motivational speaker.

I wish I (not have) this syndrome.

Appendix 7

Modal Verbs

GIVING ADVICE

Work in groups of 4 or 5 students. In turns, imagine each one of these situations and perform a dialogue. Use phrasal verbs to give advice in any case, as in the example:

- Student A: You can't let him do that anymore. You should leave him.
- Student B: I know I have to do it... but I still love him. I just can't...
- Student C: C'mon, don't be silly. You must go to the police!

Situation 1:



Imagine that one member of the group is cheating on his/her boyfriend/girlfriend. Give your friend advice about what he/she should do.

Situation 2:



Think of a hypothetical situation in which a friend of yours has got involuntarily pregnant. Tell her what you would do in her place.

Situation 3:



Imitate a situation in which a friend is being hit by her boyfriend. Make her realise that she must leave him and tell her what she has to do.

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Firstly, I would like to thank my family and friends, who are always there to help and advise me during the completion of any task. I also want to express my thankfulness to my tutor of the Jaume I University, Begoña Bellés Fortuño, who guided me throughout an academic project for the second time; and to my supervisor of the Sos Baynat secondary school, Inmaculada Chiva Gómez, who has always been a helping hand and gave me complete freedom during my classes, and whose wise advice has been a fundamental support in the fulfilment of this study.

Lastly, I want to thank the main agents that made possible the success of my work. Without the charming students that I was fortunate to teach in this fantastic centre, I would not have been able to demonstrate that they deserve more than anyone to be motivated, and that another way of teaching is possible.